

Occupational Self-Direction, Education, and
Fathers' Involvement with Young Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how job complexity, specifically, the level of self-direction in a father's occupation, affects paternal involvement. Fathers, from a sample of 112 families, completed questionnaires about employment, education and involvement with their children. This study addressed the following research questions: (1) Is the level of occupational self-direction of fathers associated with the level of fathers' responsibility, caregiving and play involvement with their children? (2) Are levels of occupational self-direction related to the type of involvement fathers have with their children? (3) Do levels of occupational self-direction continue to relate to father involvement even after taking fathers' education into account? I hypothesized that fathers who have jobs with more occupational self-direction would be more involved with their children. I further predicted that fathers with highly self-directed occupations would be more involved in play activities. When taking fathers' education into account, I hypothesized that occupational self-direction would still be associated with higher levels of involvement. Results from analyses suggest that generally speaking there is no correlation in this sample between father's occupational self-direction and paternal involvement. When considering work intensity, however, a marginally significant association was found when fathers' work hours were less intense. Fathers with higher occupational self-direction and lower work intensity were more involved with respect to responsibility than fathers with high work intensity.

Occupational Self-Direction, Education, and Fathers' Involvement with Young Children

As more and more women began to enter the workforce in the 1970s and 1980s, researchers became interested in how this change impacted families, especially its impact on children and the home environment. Prior to this period of transition, women were widely regarded as primary parents fulfilling their roles as the nurturers of children. The financial support fathers provided satisfied their roles as parents, whereas mothers were expected to maintain their roles as nurturers, even as they began to work outside the home.

The findings of research throughout the 1990s surrounding the effects of maternal employment on child outcomes are inconsistent. Clearly, there is no consensus that maternal employment is wholly negative or wholly positive for children and families. Some of the conditions under which parents work, however, can play a role in the effects of their employment on their children, in particular on the types of home environments parents provide (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). A positive home environment for children is defined as a family context that provides cognitive stimulation, emotional support, and safety (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000).

Effects of Occupational Complexity

One aspect of employment conditions that has received noted attention is the occupation's substantive complexity. "By the substantive complexity of work we mean the degree to which the work in its very substance requires thought and independent judgment." (Kohn, 1978, p. 30). Kohn (1978) was the first to emphasize the importance of occupational complexity for adult personality development. His work laid the foundation for research investigating the fluidity of the development of intellect, personality, values, self-conception, and social orientation beyond childhood. In longitudinal work, Kohn demonstrated the causal impact

of the substantive complexity of a job on adults' intellectual flexibility. The identification of this relationship between occupational complexity and intellectual flexibility was crucial in that it supported a resolution to the dispute regarding whether personality continues to be shaped by one's environment throughout the lifespan.

Kohn (1978) pointed out that there is reason to believe that men's levels of intellectual flexibility in childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood may have had an important effect on their educational attainments, and his data demonstrated that educational attainment had an extremely important effect on the substantive complexity of the early jobs in men's careers. Although it is accepted that personality plays a significant role in one's occupation, Kohn also claimed that the reverse is true; job conditions mold personality. His study suggested that the substantive complexity of men's jobs also had a causal impact on one aspect of psychological functioning, intellectual flexibility.

Since Kohn's seminal work, a number of researchers have examined whether the occupational complexity of mothers' jobs may affect the types of home environments they help provide for their children as well as children's social, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes. Parcel and Menaghan (1994) discuss a number of their studies that consider parents' use of the home environment as a significant pathway to transmit norms and values to their children, norms and values which, according to Kohn (1978), are influenced by occupational complexity. Menaghan and Parcel (1990) found that occupational complexity has strong positive effects on children's home environment, even when they controlled maternal background and current family configuration. Parents with more complex jobs were more likely to create an environment for their children that promoted their verbal facility. In a subsequent study, Menaghan and Parcel (1991) found that the working conditions of parents influence their values and behaviors relevant

to parenting. Specifically, mothers' working conditions affected their capacity to provide appropriate and responsive nurturing to their young children when they were present with them. Furthermore, mothers who work in occupations with more complex activities create more cognitively enriching home environments that are also more affectively and physically appropriate when compared to those who have jobs with less complex activities. These home environments may be the pathway through which occupational complexity influences children's own occupational outcome.

In another study, Parcel and Menaghan (1994) confirmed that occupational complexity is a critical dimension of working conditions that influences child outcomes, especially through the home environment. They found that maternal complexity measured in 1986 was associated with stronger home environments and future improvements in home environments. In 1995, Menaghan and Parcel considered how the parent's ability to provide optimal home environments may change as their occupations change. The study didn't provide substantial evidence that changes in occupational conditions among employed parents have a large impact; however, their study only examined a two year period which isn't a sufficient time to be evaluating these changes. The findings of their study demonstrated that changes in a mother's employment status do have effects on the child's home environment.

Cooksey, Menaghan, and Jekielek (1997) went beyond examination of the home environment to investigate how parental resources and social stressors combine to shape the development of children's behavioral problems. Although they didn't find a direct association between maternal employment and children's behavioral problems, mothers with occupations that were more complex had children with lower levels of behavioral problems. Results from their study support the conclusion that the resources and environment that mothers provide for

their children are associated with initial maternal resources which help to determine the work and family circumstances. In other words, current family and parental employment conditions and maternal resources make a difference for children.

Crouter and McHale (2005) addressed the interaction existing between a parent's job and his or her parenting styles and home environment. Flexibility of work hours was one employment condition they examined. According to their review of the Fullerton Longitudinal Study, Crouter and McHale reported no direct associations between mothers' work hours and child outcomes. They did point out, however, that women who had more flexible schedules also consistently had less negative maternal attitudes toward the responsibilities of work and family, which is a predictor of lower levels of behavior problems in children. Thus, Crouter and McHale claim that flexible work hours have an indirect link to child outcomes. It is evident that job characteristics have an indirect link on child outcomes in that they shape the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the parent.

Effects of Occupational Self-Direction

The complexity of a job can be observed by examining a variety of characteristics, but one of the most significant is *occupational self-direction*. According to Parcel and Menaghan's (1994) review of Kohn's work throughout the 1970s and 1980s, levels of occupational complexity and self-direction influence psychological functioning and parental values pertaining to child-rearing. When comparing white-collar work to blue-collar work, clear distinctions are apparent that influence parents. White-collar work more frequently involves manipulating ideas or symbols whereas blue-collar work requires the manipulation of things. White-collar job characteristics including the manipulation of ideas and symbols, interpersonal dealings, complexity and the lack of direct supervision promote greater autonomy and self-direction. On

the other hand, the characteristics associated with blue-collar work are more standardized and directly supervised and Kohn claims they erode intellectual flexibility and aggravate psychological distress. Low occupational standing affects parental attitudes and behavior and their ability to provide optimal child-rearing environments which ultimately lead to intergenerational consequences. White-collar parents emphasize self-direction whereas blue-collar parents stress conformity to externally imposed standards. Consistent with Kohn's results, Curtner-Smith, Bennet, and O'Rear (1995), found that fathers who engaged in more complex work valued self-direction over conformity for themselves and for their children, whereas conformity was valued among fathers engaged in less complex work. Furthermore, fathers who valued self-direction over conformity also perceived their parenting as less restrictive when compared to fathers who valued conformity over self-direction. Kohn claims that having a parent in a more complex job serves as a resource to children because the parent has higher expectations regarding self-direction and intellectual flexibility, which likely increase children's socioeconomic well-being as they mature. Likewise, Cooksey et al. (1997) cite that parents place greater value on their children developing self-direction when their work is more complex and provides opportunities to exercise self-direction. Parents in jobs that offer little autonomy are more likely to be psychologically distressed and have lower self-esteem. These parents then have little to offer their children and are less likely to promote a stimulating home environment.

Similarly, according to Parcel and Menaghan (1994), parents within occupations that allow greater autonomy and self-supervision on the job will place less emphasis on direct parental control over their children and instead promote children's ability to internalize parental norms, which lowers the probability of behavior problems. Parcel and Menaghan also state that occupational complexity creates a bond between the forms of social control parents experience

on the job and the mechanisms of control they use in socializing their children, which also affects the children's levels of behavior problems. Consistent with these ideas, Perry-Jenkins et al. (2000) noted that mothers that began employment in occupations with low to average complexity provided a lower quality of home environment over time. It is also important to note that women in more complex jobs also have higher intellectual skills and are more educated. A complex work environment reinforces these mothers' cognitive skills.

One 1994 study which examined the relationship between occupational complexity and father involvement found an association between low occupational complexity and lower levels of paternal responsive behavior with children five and seven years old (Greenberger et al). Generally, Greenberger et al. found that parents with more complex and stimulating jobs parented more positively. In their study job complexity was more relevant than the time pressures the work demands. In a recent study, Goodman et al. (2008) found no initial association between low self-direction and levels of father involvement, however, after moderation analyses the study did find occupational self-direction and care work to be associated with levels of paternal engagement and sensitivity in the presence of other risk factors. The study concluded that for fathers of families living in more rural areas, lower occupational self-direction was associated with lower paternal engagement.

Occupational self-direction may be particularly important because it may shape individuals' values, not only about parenting, but also about family roles and responsibilities (Klute, Crouter, Sayer, & McHale, 2001). Individuals who value self-direction rely on their own judgment in choosing a course of action. These individuals value qualities that involve independent thinking, including an interest in how and why things happen, self-reliance, and responsibility. On the other hand, those that value conformity are more interested in the

standards for behavior directed by authority figures. Results from Klute et al.'s study supported their hypothesis that greater occupational self-direction is associated with support for more self-directed values that endorse a more equal division of labor in the household and less traditional attitudes.

What About Fathers?

Interestingly, although Kohn's original research focused on men, less of the research on occupational characteristics and the home environment has focused on effects of fathers' jobs on fathers' parenting. Kohn's research (1977), as reviewed by Crouter and McHale (2005), reveals that working class fathers and middle class fathers differ in their approach to discipline. Fathers working in middle class occupations valued independence and initiative, whereas working class fathers valued obedience and conformity. Compliance stood out as the primary goal of working class fathers as opposed to an internalized standard valued by middle class fathers. Thus, it is evident that fathers' work may shape how they parent their children.

Understanding how fathers' occupational conditions may affect their parenting is becoming increasingly important in light of historical changes in expectations for fathers' parenting. There has been a noted cultural shift in expectations associated with fatherhood; however, the extent to which fathers are more involved with children is highly debated (Wall & Arnold, 2007). According to Wall and Arnold, since the 1980s the media has presented the new father as more involved than the 1950s sole breadwinner. Despite the media's portrayal many researchers identify a discrepancy between culture and conduct. Even when both parents are working full-time fathers spend about two-thirds as much time with preschool children as mothers. In addition, fathers spend less time doing caretaking tasks than mothers; rather, their time is more dominated by play and leisure in the presence of their spouse. Family policy,

workplace culture, the gender gap, and social expectations are all reasons for the imbalance in the amount of time mothers and fathers spend with their children. The study done by Wall and Arnold also contributes to a growing body of research that argues whether the current culture of fatherhood does indeed support involved and nurturing fathering to the extent that it claims to promote it.

However, there is also evidence that some fathers in dual-earner families are highly involved with their children. A short-term longitudinal study conducted by Crouter and McHale in 1993 suggested that fathers have a tendency to respond to their wives' longer work hours with greater parental involvement and parental knowledge (parental monitoring). Crouter and McHale (2005) assert that maternal employment pulls fathers into a more active parenting role. They concluded that work affects parents' views of the world, the way they balance multiple roles, and daily stresses which consequently influence childrearing. According to Crouter and McHale's (2005) review of the work of Larson and Richards (1994), employed fathers and mothers have a different experience of work and family life. Fathers' moods lightened after returning home from work. The housework and childcare that they performed were more positive experiences than those of mothers because this work was voluntary and usually acknowledged by their spouse. Crouter and McHale claim that men get involved when they are in the mood, but wives are expected to perform these tasks, which often go unrecognized.

When fathers are involved in child rearing, there is evidence that they have a positive impact on their children's development (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). For example, historically, mothers have been viewed as assuming the primary role in the education of their children, whereas fathers have taken a supportive role. According to McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan and Ho (2005), there is a positive impact on student achievement when fathers assume an active role in

their children's education. Also, fathers may enhance the resources that are available to their children by taking a more active role in their children's education, especially when coping with the negative impact of risk factors associated with family income.

Because involved fathers can have a positive impact on their children, researchers are interested in identifying factors that may affect the extent of a father's involvement. One such factor could be occupational characteristics. Father employment tends to be expected, which is likely the reason that the implications fathers' work characteristics have on parenting has received less attention than that of mothers. Research is needed to determine how fathers' work characteristics affect their involvement. Some studies have focused on workplace policies, which may influence the hours that parents work by placing varying levels of both explicit and implicit expectations on fathers and mothers. Long, inflexible hours may not be a formal requirement, but they may be vital for promotion within an organization. According to their 1989 study Greenberger et al found that fathers used formal benefits less than mothers did. Parental leave may be available to employees, but the use of it may be informally discouraged. It is possible that informal messages are being sent to fathers which encourage their presence at work, and consequently keeping them away from home. If these aspects of work conditions affect fathers' involvement with their children, it seems likely that other aspects, such as occupational self-direction, may matter as well.

The Role of Education and Family Earner Status

When considering the potential for occupational self-direction to influence parenting, it is important to acknowledge the role of parental education in selection into particular jobs. Recall that Kohn (1978) acknowledged that educational attainment had an extremely important effect on the substantive complexity of the early jobs in men's careers. Maternal educational attainment

and maternal cognitive skills are associated with preferable parenting actions and have shown strong effects on child outcomes in past research (Cooksey et al., 1997). Menaghan and Parcel (1991) maintain that older women with higher levels of education in their study were able to create stronger home environments through the use of their more developed cognitive and problem-solving skills. Further, these women were also able to obtain more substantively complex employment, which continued to enhance their intellectual and emotional well-being.

Less research has examined relations between fathers' education and their parenting. According to Pleck (1997), some studies have found that more educated fathers are more involved with their children, whereas other studies have found no relationship between fathers' education and their involvement. However, paternal education should be taken into account when examining the effects of fathers' work characteristics on their parenting.

Previous studies have also considered how family earner status may affect parental involvement. In their study Volling and Belsky (1991) found that personality characteristics of the father contributed to the prediction of paternal responsibility only within the single-earner families. Within dual-earner families, father's personality characteristics did not predict their participation in child care. Within their review of literature, Volling and Belsky discuss how the differences may affect fathers' involvement. If he is the sole breadwinner, the father has a choice when considering the number of parenting responsibilities he takes on and in what form, whereas when the mother is also working, the father's parental responsibilities are more of an obligation and shared between both parents. When evaluating how a father's job affects his involvement with his children it is also crucial to consider the family earner status, because it may also play a role in the father's involvement.

The Present Study

The central goal of this study is to examine the relationship between occupational self-direction and fathers' involvement with their young children. The study will also consider how education may influence both the complexity of a father's job and the father's level of involvement. Specifically, my study will address the following questions: (1) Are levels of occupational self-direction related to levels of father involvement in child care, play, and responsibility? (2) Are levels of occupational self-direction associated more with one type of involvement than with another? (3) Do levels of occupational self-direction continue to relate to father involvement even after taking fathers' education into account? I hypothesize that higher levels of occupational self-direction will be associated with higher levels of father involvement; given that past research has demonstrated that the mothers with more complex work provide better home environments. Further, I predict that high levels of occupational self-direction will lead to more play involvement in particular. When I consider Kohn's research, men in occupations with higher self-direction would seem more likely to be involved with their children in creative activities, such as play, than in specific tasks associated with caregiving. Also, past research has shown that fathers who are more involved are more likely to be involved in play activities than those related to caregiving. Finally, I think that the level of occupational self-direction will be related to paternal involvement even when considering education because Kohn's research has demonstrated that job characteristics continue to shape men's personalities across time.

Method

Participants

At Phase 1 of the study, the study sample consisted of 112 families (father, mother, and child). It was necessary for all participating families to meet three initial criteria: (a) Fathers and

mothers had to be either married or cohabitating, (b) The participating child needed to be between 3.5 and 4.5 years old, and (c) Fathers, mothers, and the designated child needed to be able to attend sessions together at the campus laboratory. Researchers found and recruited the families through the use of advertisements such as flyers placed in local preschools, a university newsletter, and referrals from other participants. This study was reviewed and approved by OSU's Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board.

Ninety-three fathers of the original 112 were included in the present study. Nineteen fathers were excluded from the sample. Eight fathers were not currently working so they could not be included in this study. Due to the limited descriptions given by eight additional fathers, their occupations could not be coded accurately within the O*Net database. Three fathers' occupational codes within the database did not have scores for the characteristics associated with occupational self-direction and therefore were excluded as they could not be used in our analysis.

At the time of their first visit to the laboratory, the children were approximately 4.12 years old ($SD = .53$ years; 58 boys, 55 girls). Fathers' ages ranged from 25.1 to 56.7 years ($M = 37.5$). 82% European-American, 9% African-American, about 5% Hispanic-American, 1% Asian & 1% mixed race. 81% of fathers had earned at least a college degree. Families' income ranged from less than \$10,000 a year to over \$100,000 a year (Median = \$71,000 to \$80,000). The mothers' ages ranged from 22.15 years to 56.17 years ($M = 35.9$ years; $SD = 5.4$). The participating families ranged in size from three to nine members ($M = 4.22$; $SD = 0.98$). Sixty percent of the children who participated were first born, whereas the remaining 40% were classified as other (range: second born to sixth or later-born).

Among the children participating in the study, 76% were European American, 1% were African American, 1% were Asian, and the remaining 12% were from a mixed ethnic

background. Of the fathers, 84% were European American, 5% were Hispanic, 9% were African American, 1% were Asian, and 1% were from a mixed ethnic background. Out of the mothers participating in the study, 85% were European American, 2% were Hispanic, 9% were African American, 2% were Asian, and 2% were from a mixed ethnic background.

Regarding education, 81% of fathers and 83% of mothers had earned at least a college degree (range for fathers: some high school to Ph.D; range for mothers: high school diploma to Ph.D). Employment for fathers and mothers ranged from zero hours to over fifty hours a week, with 66% of fathers working forty-one to over fifty hours a week, 43% of mothers working zero hours a week outside the home. Thirty-four percent of fathers were working between twenty-one and forty hours a week. In regards to mothers working status, 22% were working part-time and 15% were working full-time. The families' income ranged from less than \$10,000 a year to over \$100,000 a year (Median = \$71,000 to \$80,000).

Measures

Occupational self-direction. A questionnaire was used to gather the fathers' job titles and a brief description of their responsibilities. The O*Net database was accessed online and used to categorize and score the occupations of each father in order to determine the level of occupational self-direction for each job. Data on job characteristics which was collected from parents during Phase 1 was recorded, including job title and description, education, and work hours. Fathers' job descriptions were matched with a job within the O*Net Database and each was given a corresponding code. The Occupational Information Network, or O*Net is an electronic database on the work characteristics of over 950 occupations (Crouter, Lanza, Pirretti, Goodman, & Neebe, 2006). Each job code was matched to a score for characteristics related to occupational self-direction. I determined which items corresponded to occupational self-direction

from the 2006 study done by Crouter et al. and used these top sixteen items in the present study. The sixteen items I included were organize, plan, prioritize; think creatively; make decisions, solve problems; develop objectives, strategies; schedule work, activities; responsible for outcomes, results; coordinate work activities; guide, direct, motivate others; coordinate, lead others; frequency of conflict situations; resolve conflict, negotiate; establish interpersonal relationships; train, teach others; provide consultation, advice; coach, develop others; and develop, build teams. Summary scores were created by averaging fathers' scores on these sixteen items.

Father involvement in caregiving, play, and responsibility. Fathers' involvement with their children was assessed through questionnaires. Fathers reported on the levels of their involvement with their children in a variety of activities using the Parental Involvement in Activities (PIA) questionnaire. The PIA contains various questions from pre-existing survey measures of father involvement (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan, McBride, & Ho, 2004). Paternal involvement was assessed through eight questions related to caregiving activities (e.g., put him/her to bed) and eight related to play activities (e.g., play outside with him/her). Each item was rated on a 6-point scale (1 = not at all to 6 = more than once a day). Summary scores were created by averaging fathers' scores from these items. Parents completed the Parental Responsibility Scale (PRS) in order to measure parental involvement (McBride & Mills, 1993). The PRS was used to assess the parents' perceptions of maternal, paternal, and joint involvement in 14 child care tasks (e.g., taking the child to the doctor, making babysitting arrangements). Respondents rate who assumes responsibility for each child care task from 1 (mother almost always) to 5 (father almost always). This measure yields a total score reflecting

overall responsibility. McBride, Schoppe, & Rane (2002) reported moderate internal consistency for this measure.

Results

Analysis Plan

First, basic correlations were computed without any controls to examine the associations between occupational self-direction and paternal involvement. Next, partial correlations were also computed taking fathers' education and mothers' work hours into account. After considering that the intensity of work hours could be a confounding variable with respect to the relation between occupational self-direction and fathers' involvement, further analyses were conducted after dividing the sample into low and high work intensity groups. Partial correlations, also controlling for fathers' education and mothers' work hours, were computed separately for low work intensity vs. high work intensity fathers. The strength and the direction of these correlations were compared using Fisher's r to z test.

Descriptive Analyses

As shown in Figure 1, the sample consisted of occupations that could be grouped into types of categories including managers, teachers (which also included professors), financial/numbers (such as treasurers/controllers and personal financial managers), computer related (including computer operators and network systems/data communication analysts), engineers, medical, lawyers, and executive assistants. The occupations of the fathers in the sample were generally high in self-direction. The chart also shows a group of a few other miscellaneous jobs such as a chef/head cook, janitor, police officer and editor.

Major Analyses

Recall that my research questions were: 1.) Is fathers' occupational self-direction associated with their involvement with their children in caregiving, play and responsibility? 2.) Are levels of occupational self-direction related to the type of involvement fathers have with their children? 3.) Do levels of occupational self-direction continue to relate to father involvement even after taking fathers' education and mothers' work hours into account?

There were no significant correlations between occupational self-direction and father involvement. The lack of significant correlations was consistent across type of father involvement. Partial correlations controlling for fathers' education and mothers' work hours were also not significant. Generally speaking, in this sample no correlation was found between fathers' occupational self-direction and paternal involvement. The association may only be seen when fathers' work hours are less intense.

Further Analyses

Most fathers in this sample were working intense hours. Intense work hours may be a barrier to involvement regardless of occupational self-direction. Thus, the sample was split in order to look at the fathers in the sample with and without this possible barrier. Fathers working 20 hours or less were excluded from the study. The full-time working fathers were divided into low work intensity and high work intensity groups. The low work intensity group consisted of fathers working between 21 and 40 hours a week. Fathers who work over 40 hours a week were assigned to the high work intensity group. Partial correlations were computed separately for fathers with high vs. low work intensity, controlling for fathers' education and mothers' work hours.

In the analyses for involvement in play and responsibility the direction of the associations with occupational self-direction was positive only among fathers with low intensity work hours.

For fathers with high intensity work hours, these associations were negative. For both groups, the direction of the association of occupational self-direction with caregiving was negative. While the direction of the associations between occupational self-direction and play/responsibility was positive, these correlations were not statistically significant, likely because of a low sample size ($n = 24$) in the low work intensity group. Thus, in order to further determine whether the patterns of associations were different in the high vs. low work intensity groups, it was necessary to compare the strength of the correlations across the two intensity groups. Fisher's r to z test was used in order to compare the strength of the associations between occupational self-direction and involvement by work intensity for fathers' responsibility and play involvement. The difference between the correlations for responsibility was marginally significant. When the test was computed for responsibility, the r -value for the low intense group was .272 which was compared with the high intense group r -value of -.148 resulting in a p -value of .099. Therefore, the difference between these two scores demonstrates the possible beneficial role of occupational self-direction for responsibility involvement among fathers who have less intense work hours. With respect to play, the difference between the r -values of the low and high groups, which were .261 and -.132 respectively, was not even marginally significant, with a p -value of .123; however, the lack of statistical significance in the association with play could be due to the small sample size, which weakened the statistical power of the correlations, as play is generally found to be the most popular form of involvement among involved fathers.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how occupational complexity, namely self-direction affected paternal involvement in caregiving, play and responsibility. I hypothesized that fathers who have jobs with more occupational self-direction would be more involved with their

children. According to Parcel and Menaghan's (1994) review of Kohn's work throughout the 1970s and 1980s, levels of occupational complexity and self-direction influence psychological functioning and parental values pertaining to child-rearing. Thus, I thought that occupational self-direction would be one aspect of occupational complexity that could potentially increase paternal involvement. This study did not demonstrate that fathers who have a high level of occupation self-direction are more involved. Likely due to a lack of variability within the sample, in regards to levels of occupational self-direction and involvement, analyses did not show a significant correlation between occupational self-direction and involvement.

Previous research has shown that when fathers are more involved, the majority of their involvement tends to be in play activities, thus I predicted that fathers with highly self-directed occupations would be more involved in play activities. Analyses did not demonstrate a significant correlation between occupational self-direction and paternal play involvement.

Sixty-six percent of the sample consisted of fathers who worked over forty hours each week. The number of fathers that were working intense hours may have prevented significant findings, as high work hours are possibly a barrier to the effects of occupational self-direction on involvement. In other words, even if a father has high occupational self-direction and values being an involved parent, the number of hours he works may prevent him from being more involved with his child. The most significant result, however, which was only marginally significant, was found when comparing the strength of the association between occupational self-direction and fathers' involvement with respect to responsibility for fathers within the low and high work intensity groups. Fathers with higher occupational self-direction and lower work intensity were more involved with respect to responsibility than fathers with high work intensity. Specifically, fathers' involvement in play and responsibility was positively associated with

occupational self-direction among fathers with low work intensity. The level of occupational self-direction for fathers working intense hours was negatively associated with caregiving, play and responsibility, thus work hours could be one aspect of a father's job that prevents other occupational characteristics from promoting an increase in his involvement. Even when fathers want to be more involved and their occupation has contributed to shaping them, notably in their value of involvement, work hours could be a barrier to actually being more involved.

Perhaps a father's level of occupational self-direction affects the type of involvement with his child in a different way than I hypothesized. The present study included three types of involvement including caregiving, play and responsibility. While it is understood that fathers who are more involved are most likely to be more involved in play, it is possible that occupational self-direction shapes fathers to be more involved in regards to responsibility. This seems reasonable when considering characteristics of occupations associated with self-direction such as *organize, plan, prioritize and schedule work, activities*. Additionally, fathers with higher occupational self-direction tend to have values which reflect less traditional gender roles. Therefore, fathers with higher occupational self-direction, who maintain reasonable work hours, may be more open to having responsibility for their children in ways that are typically reserved for mothers such as making babysitting arrangements. This study, however, did not significantly demonstrate the correlation between occupational self-direction and involvement with respect to responsibility, but suggests its possibility. When considering the results from analyses and the characteristics associated with occupational self-direction, fathers who have higher occupational self-direction may be more likely to be involved in the area of responsibility. This may be one way in which fathers with higher occupational self-direction could differ from other fathers who are also more involved with their children.

When taking fathers' education into account, I hypothesized that occupational self-direction would still be associated with higher levels of involvement. Results from analyses suggest that generally speaking there is no correlation in this sample between father's occupational self-direction and paternal involvement even when taking fathers' education into account.

Strengths and Limitations

The sample that was used in this study had many relatively highly involved fathers. One limitation this caused was a lack of variability in our sample. It was challenging to demonstrate an effect of occupational self-direction on involvement when so many of the fathers were highly involved. The sample also lacked variability in regards to race and education. The majority of the fathers in the sample was European American and had obtained a college degree. Additionally, the average income within the sample was very high and not reflective of the national population.

Another limitation was the lack of variability and uneven distribution of the work hours of the participants in the study. A considerable number of fathers worked over 50 hours a week which created a skewed analysis of the relationship between fathers' occupational self-direction and paternal involvement. There were too many fathers in the sample that worked a high number of hours which limited their involvement even if their job scored high on self-direction. In previous research on the effects of occupational complexity on parental involvement, nationally representative data sets were utilized (Kohn, 1978; Parcel & Menaghan, 1990). Even if not nationally representative, other research has utilized samples with more demographic variability. Results from Goodman's 2008 study suggested that several occupational characteristics were associated with levels of fathers' engagement and sensitivity. Among fathers of families living in

more rural areas lower occupational self-direction was associated with lower paternal engagement. This study differed from the present study in that it focused on low-income families and examined the effects of low occupational self-direction. Additionally, the sample size was sufficient consisting of over 1,000 families and the variety of the sample was compatible to the examination of the possible consequences of low occupational self-direction.

Another significant limitation within the present study was the inadequate information that was gathered from the parents in Phase 1 of the study. The study was not designed to get the level of information needed to obtain job codes. The data was not collected considering the future use of the O*Net database system, thus it was challenging to classify the jobs accurately with limited job descriptions. Some descriptions did not provide enough information to find an exact job match within the database. For example, many of the professors within the sample were excluded because they did not specify their field of study. The occupational self-direction scores varied depending on the type of professor, so they could not be coded and could not be used in the study. In future research, more comprehensive surveys should be developed in order to obtain very specific job descriptions from the participants.

Future research should also consider measuring father involvement qualitatively in addition to quantitatively. The present study lacked a measurement for the quality of the fathers' involvement with their children. It is possible that occupational self-direction could have an effect on the quality of the time fathers spend with their children in addition to the type of their involvement. Play can be measured in many different ways including both quantitatively by asking parents through questionnaires and through observation. In the present study a quantitative measure was used rather than observational. It is difficult to measure responsibility in a way other than by asking the parents to report what their responsibilities are. The means of

measuring responsibility involvement in the present study seems to be an appropriate one; however, other ways of measuring play could be utilized in future research.

Further research could reveal a correlation between fathers' occupational self-direction and increased involvement with respect to responsibility, rather than play, as is typically observed among fathers who tend to be more involved. The present study found a marginally significant difference when comparing the strength of the association between occupational self-direction and fathers' involvement in regards to responsibility for fathers within the low and high work intensity groups. While the present study suggests that the level of fathers' occupational self-direction could affect the type of their involvement, additional research is needed to demonstrate more clearly how occupational self-direction affects the type of paternal involvement.

Conclusion

Since mothers have traditionally been considered the primary caregivers of children, researchers were interested in how their employment affected their role as a parent when they began entering the work force in growing numbers throughout the 1970s and 80s. Expectations for fathers have changed within our culture, as is evident within the media's portrayal of fathers' increased parental involvement; however, a large discrepancy still exists between the roles of mothers and fathers (Wall & Arnold, 2007). Thus, it is important to investigate what could contribute to the levels of fathers' involvement with their children.

Overall, the present study suggests that occupational self-direction could play a role in the level and type of father involvement, consistent with Kohn's research demonstrating that men's occupations mold personality. Future research should continue to investigate what is molded by occupational characteristics. Research could potentially consider how occupations

shape personality, beliefs, values, and skills, in addition to exploring how these play a role in fathers' involvement.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

	M	SD	Range
Fathers' Occupational Self-Direction	57.74	10.84	26.25 – 77.25
Caregiving Involvement	3.71	.56	2.57 – 5.00
Play Involvement	3.64	.68	2.14 – 5.43
Responsibility Involvement	2.47	.36	1.43 – 3.36

Table 2

Correlations between Occupational Self-Direction and Fathers' Involvement

Occupational Self-Direction

Fathers' involvement	Correlation	Partial Correlation*
Caregiving	.06	.04
Play	-.06	-.06
Responsibility	.01	-.04

*Controls for fathers' education and mothers' work hours

Table 3

Split Sample Correlations between Occupational Self-Direction and Fathers' Involvement

Fathers' Involvement	Occupational Self-Direction*	
	Low Work Intensity	High work Intensity
Caregiving	-.134	-.007
Play	.261	-.132
Responsibility	.272	-.148

*Controls for fathers' education and mothers' work hours

Table 4

Fisher's r to z test

Occupational Self-Direction			
Fathers' Involvement	Low Work Intensity	High Work Intensity	P-Value
Play	.261	-.132	.123
Responsibility	.272	-.148	.099

Figure 1

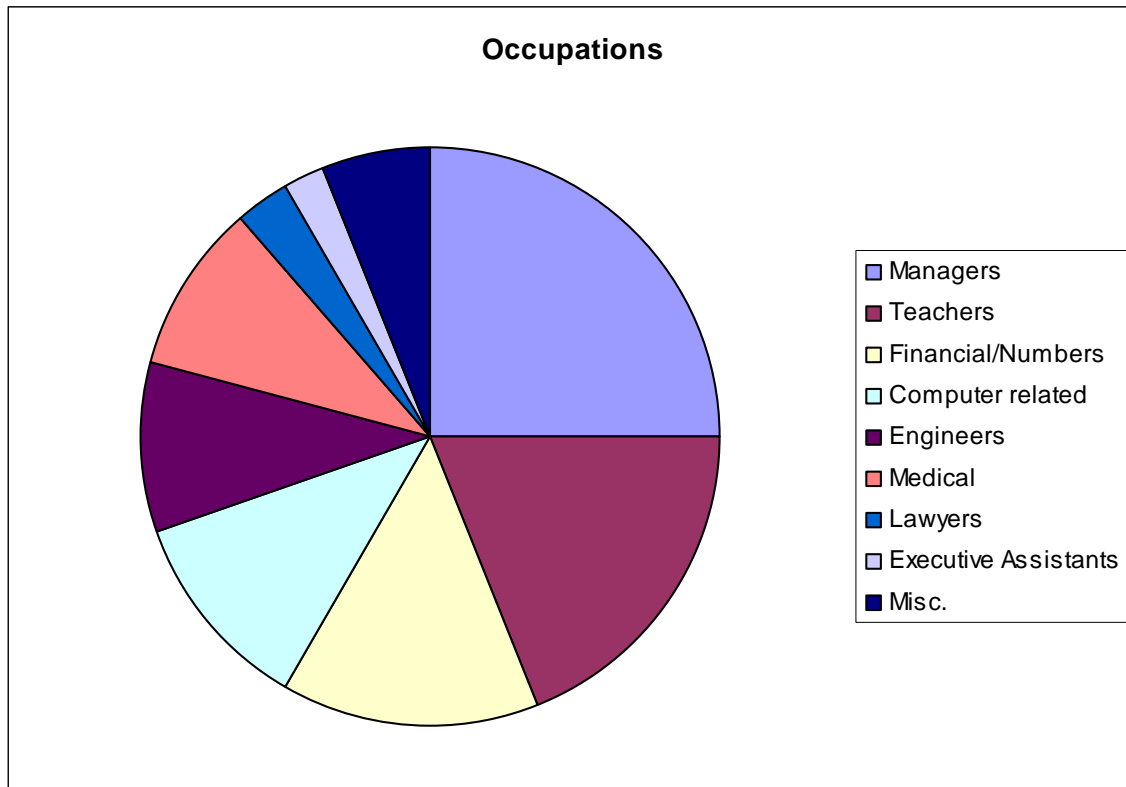


Figure 2

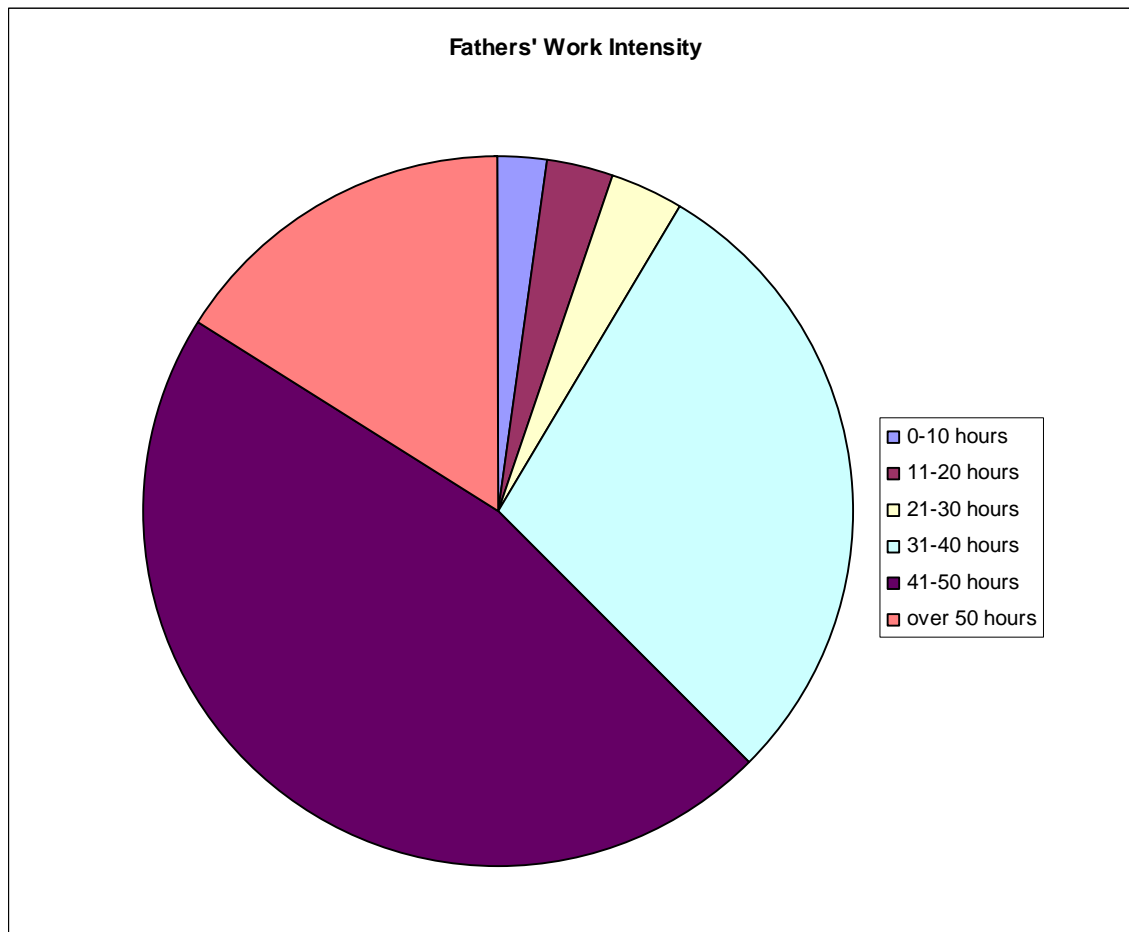


Figure 3

